

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

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DRAFTED BY EA/ANP:JFKNOWLES:RLW

APPROVED BY EA/ANP:JFKNOWLES

EA:JOZURHELLEN

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R 240028Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC

S E C R E T STATE 121816

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MARR, SN, NZ

SUBJECT: US NAVAL ACCESS TO SINGAPORE

REF: STATE 117267

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. EA ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY ZURHELLEN ON MAY 22
RAISED WITH NZ AMBASSADOR WHITE US REQUEST THAT NEW ZEALAND
TAKE OVER MANAGEMENT OF SENOKO FUEL DEPOT AND ADJACENT
BERTHS FOR BENEFIT OF FPDA PARTNERS AND US.

2. ZURHELLEN REVIEWED BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF OUR
DISCUSSIONS WITH GNZ TO DATE. NOTED THAT BRITISH DECISION
TO PULL OUT OF SINGAPORE BY EARLY 1976 HAD RAISED QUESTION
OF FUTURE DISPOSITION OF NAVAL FACILITIES WE ALL HAVE BEEN
USING. US NAVY SURVEY HAD CONCLUDED THAT REVERSION TO
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COMMERCIAL USE OF SENOKO FUEL DEPOT AND ADJACENT BERTHS

COULD BE SERIOUS DETRIMENT TO ALL OF US, ENDANGERING OUR CONTINUED ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES. IN ASKING GNZ TO TAKE OVER MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THESE FACILITIES, WE HAD OFFERED TO UNDERWRITE SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF COSTS OF OPERATION, WHICH WE ESTIMATED WOULD REQUIRE NOT MORE THAN 3 EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL AND PERHAPS 20 LOCALS TO CARRY OUT.

WE DID NOT HAVE IN MIND THAT NZ ACT AS "FRONT" FOR US BUT RATHER SHARED USE OF SINGAPORE FACILITIES FOR BENEFIT OF BOTH US AND FPDA POWERS. CONTINUED SECURE ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES WAS IMPORTANT TO OUR ABILITY TO MAINTAIN PRESENCE IN ASIA-PACIFIC AREA. SHIFT OF MANAGEMENT FROM UK TO ITS NEW ZEALAND FPDA PARTNER WOULD BE LOOKED ON AS NATURAL DEVELOPMENT WHEREAS US MANAGEMENT MIGHT BE REGARDED IN SEA AS MAJOR DEVELOPMENT WITH POSSIBLE UNSETTLING CONSEQUENCES. NZ MANAGEMENT WOULD ALSO TEND TO INSULATE GOS FROM POLITICAL PRESSURES REGARDING USE OF FACILITIES, FOR EXAMPLE IN EVENT OF ANOTHER OIL EMBARGO.

3. ZURHELLEN RECALLED THAT DURING HIS MAY 7 VISIT TO WASHINGTON PM ROWLING HAD SAID PM LEE TOLD HIM AT COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE IN JAMAICA THAT HE WISHED FACILITIES TO REVERT TO GOS AND THAT US AND OTHERS' ACCESS TO FACILITIES SHOULD BE WORKED OUT ON BILATERAL BASIS WITH GOS. ROWLING HAD SAID GNZ WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT MATTER SHOULD LEE CHANGE HIS POSITION. WE HAD THEN DISCUSSED SUBJECT IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL WITH LEE DURING HIS WASHINGTON VISIT MAY 9. APPARENTLY LEE HAS CHANGED HIS POSITION SINCE HE SPECIFICALLY TOLD US THAT HE WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH USG AND WOULD PREFER THAT ONE OF FPDA PARTNERS MANAGE FACILITIES. WE THEREFORE WISHED TO REQUEST GNZ TO RECONSIDER OUR REQUEST THAT GNZ MANAGE FACILITIES.

4. AMBASSADOR WHITE ASKED NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, STARTING WITH WHO WOULD OWN TANK FARM. WE SAID THIS HAD NOT BEEN FULLY EXPLORED, BUT WE BELIEVED OWNERSHIP WOULD REST WITH GOS. WHITE REMARKED OIL WOULD THEN BE SINGAPORE OIL REGARDLESS OF MIDEAST ORIGIN. WE RECALLED LAST OIL

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EMBARGO IN WHICH GOS EMBARGOED TRANSFER OF OIL TO AMERICAN VESSELS BUT TOOK POSITION THAT BRITISH-MANAGED BASE FACILITIES WERE DIFFERENT. WHITE THEN SAID HE DID NOT QUESTION US DESIRE FOR ASSURED SUPPLY OF OIL BUT KEY QUESTION WAS FOR HOW LONG WE WOULD NEED OIL FROM SINGAPORE FACILITY. HE UNDERSTOOD SINGAPORE OIL WAS ONLY REQUIRED FOR OPERATIONS IN INDIAN OCEAN AND THAT WE WOULD NOT NEED TO USE SINGAPORE FACILITY ONCE DIEGO GARCIA BECAME

AVAILABLE. WE REPLIED THAT WE FORESAW INDEFINITE REQUIREMENT FOR ACCESS TO SINGAPORE FACILITY AND COULD NOT SAY FOR HOW MANY YEARS. SINGAPORE FACILITY WAS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT OPERATIONS IN PACIFIC AS WELL AS IN INDIAN OCEAN. MAYAGUEZ EXPERIENCE HAD DEMONSTRATED LIMITATION ON OUR CAPABILITIES WHEN OIL NOT AVAILABLE IN VICINITY.

5. WHITE REPEATEDLY REMARKED THAT LEE HAD TOLD GNZ ONE THING AND USG ANOTHER. HE WONDERED IF PART OF LEE'S WORRY WAS NEED TO BE EVENHANDED AND GIVE ACCESS TO USSR AS WELL AS US. WHITE SAID HE HAD DIFFICULTY SQUARING LEE SPEECHES URGING U.S. TO STAY STRONG AND REMAIN IN AREA WITH WHAT HE HAD TOLD US IN WASHINGTON. WE SUGGESTED THAT LEE MAY BE CONCERNED ABOUT FUTURE OIL EMBARGO BUT ALSO MAY ENVISAGE POLITICAL PRESSURES IN SEA IF HE PROVIDES "BASE" TO US.

6. WHITE NOTED THAT GNZ AGREEMENT TO MANAGE SINGAPORE FACILITY WOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS ROUTINE MATTER IN NEW ZEALAND WHERE THERE WAS CONCERN OVER ACTING AS "FRONT" FOR U.S. AND CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE POLITICAL PRESSURES ON NEW ZEALAND IN EVENT OF OIL EMBARGO. HE SAID HE WOULD REPORT OUR APPROACH TO GNZ WHICH HE KNEW WOULD WANT TO CHECK WITH PM LEE ON HIS POSITION IN MATTER. HE BELIEVED THAT GNZ WOULD TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT OUR REQUEST BUT SAID HE COULD NOT OFFER SOLUTION TO PROBLEM AT THIS TIME. KISSINGER

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